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FRESH TENSIONS AS CHINESE, FILIPINO SHIPS COLLIDE IN DISPUTED WATERS

The incident near the Second Thomas Shoal in the South China Sea (SCS) comes amid rising tensions and dangerous military maneuvers by both sides

BEIJING, MANILA POINT FINGERS AT EACH OTHER

The Chinese coast guard said a Philippine supply ship entered the waters near the Second Thomas Shoal, ignored warnings and dangerously approached a Chinese vessel, resulting in Monday's collision. The Philippines says the shoal and the waters nearby fall within its exclusive economic zone and Chinese ships have no business being there — a claim disputed by Beijing | P9

A MAJOR FLASHPOINT IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

- Several incidents of near collision have been reported in recent months near the shoal, where Manila maintains a post aboard a World War II-era ship
- The incident comes at a time when China is aggressively pursuing its territorial claims in the SCS. Just days ago, a new Chinese law took effect that allows for detention of foreigners who enter SCS without permission

1,000+ km

IS THE DISTANCE BETWEEN MAINLAND CHINA AND THE SECOND THOMAS SHOAL

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Rescue work underway after a speeding goods train rammed into the stationary Kanchanjunga Express near Rangapani railway station in West Bengal on Monday | PTI

Goods train rams express, kills 9

Stationary Kanchanjunga Express hit in the rear by speeding goods train in West Bengal

SULAGNA SENGUPTA & RAJESH THAKUR @ Kolkata / New Delhi

A fast-moving goods train rammed into a stationary passenger express from behind in West Bengal's Darjeeling district on Monday morning, killing at least nine persons and injuring over 40 others. The toll may go up as the condition of some of the injured are said to be serious.

According to reports, the goods train overshot the red signal at high speed and collided with the Sealdah-bound Kanchanjunga Express. The impact was such that four rear compartments of Kanchanjunga Express were thrown off track. The loco pilot of the goods train, which was on its way from Agartala in Tripura to Sealdah (West Bengal), and a guard of the passenger train are among those killed.

The collision occurred near Rangapani station, 30 km from New Jalpaiguri station. The Kavach anti-collision system has not been implemented on the route, said an official.

Local media reports quoting police sources pegged the toll at 15. While the Commissioner of Railway Safety has initiated a probe, conflicting versions emerged. Speaking to media persons in Delhi, Railway Board Chairperson Jaya Varma Sinha blamed the loco pilot of the goods train for the accident. "The collision happened because the goods train disregarded the signal and hit the Kanchanjunga Express," he said.

However, the loco pilots' union said the automatic signalling system was defective since 5.50 am on Monday and the loco pilot had got written authorisation to go past the signals. The document, called TA 912, was reportedly issued to the driver of the goods train by the station master of Ranipatra, authorising him to cross all red signals. However, officials said even with TA 912, the train should have moveed at 15 kmph. This speed limit seems to have been breached, said sources.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw rushed to the accident spot to take stock of the rescue efforts. He also announced ₹10 lakh ex gratia to the next of kin of the deceased. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that the Rail ministry is not bothered about passenger safety.

Rahul picks Rae Bareli, Priyanka to make poll debut from Wayanad

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

ENDING suspense, the Congress on Monday announced that former party chief Rahul Gandhi will retain the Rae Bareli Lok Sabha constituency and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will make her electoral debut from the Wayanad seat. Rahul had won both Rae Bareli and Wayanad with a huge margin of votes.

This paper was the first to report on June 7 that Rahul would retain Rae Bareli and let go of the Kerala constituency.

On fielding Priyanka from Wayanad, Congress leaders said the party wanted to send out a message that it hasn't abandoned Wayanad and Kerala. Political observers say that Priyanka's entry is a strategic move by the grand old party ahead of the 2026 Kerala assembly elections.

The decision came after the Congress top leadership met at party president Mallikarjun Kharge's in the national capital. Speaking to the media, Rahul said he has an emotional connection with Rae Bareli and Wayanad and both constituencies will now have two MPs.

"Priyanka will contest from Wayanad, but I will also go there frequently and fulfil all the promises we made to the people. I have an old connection with Rae Bareli and I am happy to represent them, but it wasn't an easy decision. The people of Wayanad supported me. My doors will be always open for them," he said.

Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra embrace before announcing that she will contest the Wayanad seat after he gives it up, in New Delhi on Monday | PTI

For her part, Priyanka said she will help her brother in Rae Bareli and would be available in both seats. Apart from Rahul and Priyanka, Sonia Gandhi and senior leader KC Venugopal were also present in the meeting at Kharge's house.

If Priyanka is elected from Wayanad, Parliament will see all three Gandhi family members — Sonia, Rahul, and Priyanka — in the House. This will also mark a political shift in the party as the Congress seeks to increase its footprint in the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh after its strong show in the recent Lok Sabha elections.

The leadership believes that the Congress is on a revival path in UP after winning six seats with an increase in its vote share. The SP-Congress alliance won 43 of 80 seats in the elections. "The party is also eying the assembly elections in the state 2027. The Rahul-Akhilesh combo will boost the alliance," said a leader.

Shah: Fresh peace talks with Meiteis & Kukis

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

UNION home minister Amit Shah on Monday said the Centre would hold talks with both the Meiteis and the Kukis to bridge the ethnic divide in Manipur and restore peace and tranquility at the earliest. He made the statement at a high-level meeting to review the security situation there amidst reports of fresh incidents of trouble in the state.

Shah was given a detailed briefing on the situation by Security Advisor to the Manipur government Kuldiep Singh, DGP Rajiv Singh and Chief Secretary Vineet Joshi.

The home minister assured that the head count of Central Armed Police Forces would be increased if required and directed them to ensure their strategic deployment.

He also asked the officials to take strict legal action against those who indulge in violence, officials said.

As for those at relief camps, Shah directed Chief Secretary Vineet Joshi to ensure proper health and education facilities for the displaced people and their rehabilitation.

The home minister took stock of the situation a day after Manipur Governor Anusuiya Uikey called on him here. On June 10, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had expressed concern over peace eluding Manipur for over a year.

There were reports of fresh violence in capital Imphal and Jiribam recently, the officials said, adding that the Centre is worried over the violence spreading to new areas like Jiribam, which has been by and large peaceful in the past one year since the ethnic clashes erupted in May 2023, the sources said.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla, Director of Intelligence Bureau Tapan Deka, Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande, Army Chief-designate Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi were present at the hour-long meeting.

RENUKASWAMY'S MURDER

Man who gave electric shocks to victim nabbed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Vijaynagar sub-division police investigating the **Renukaswamy** murder case have arrested another accused, who had allegedly given electric shocks to the victim with a megger device. The police have reportedly recovered the device. With this arrest, the number of accused arrested in the case has gone up to 17.

Meanwhile, the police recorded the statement of actor Chikkanna, who reportedly attended a party at Stonny Brook pub from where actor Darshan allegedly went to the shed at Pattanagere in RR Nagar where Renukaswamy was murdered.

The police gave the name of the accused as Raju alias Dhanaraj, a dog breeder from RR Nagar. He worked at Darshan's house and took care of his dogs. Raju is accused No 9 in the case and was absconding. He was arrested from his friend's house in the city on Sunday.

V Vinay, accused No 10, who lived at Jayanna's (shed owner) farmhouse at Pattanagere, had introduced Raju to Darshan. Among the accused, S Nandeesh of Krishnappa Layout in RR Nagar and Raju are alleged to have given electric shocks to Renukaswamy at the behest of Vinay.

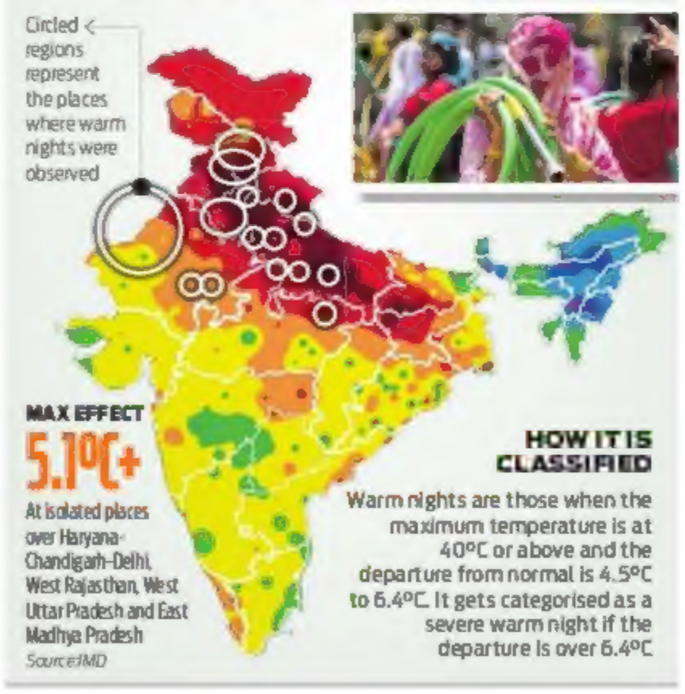
During interrogation, none of the accused told the police about electric shocks given to the victim. This, however, came to light during postmortem. The accused are alleged to have given electric shocks to the private parts of the victim. The police are looking for the chair on which the victim was made to sit. Raju is said to have purchased the device online. He purchased it long ago and the police suspect that the device was used to give electric shocks to loan defaulters who were brought to the shed.

Special public prosecutor P Prasanna Kumar, while seeking police custody of the accused on Saturday, informed the court about electric shocks given to the victim. P3

EXPRESS MAPS

Now, night 'heatwaves'

With the North continuing to bake, warm night to severe warm night conditions observed some parts of Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi and in isolated pockets of UP on Monday. Warm night conditions observed in isolated pockets of Punjab, Rajasthan and West Madhya Pradesh



India committed to boost strategic ties with US: PM

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

INDIA is committed to strengthening its comprehensive global strategic partnership with the US, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday after meeting the US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who is on an official visit to India.

"Met US National Security Advisor @JakeSullivan46. India is committed to further strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership for global good," Modi wrote on X.

Sullivan briefed Modi on the progress achieved in various areas of bilateral cooperation, particularly under the Initiation on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).

"PM expressed satisfaction at the speed and scale of the growing bilateral partnership in all areas and the convergence of views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

Sullivan also met the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. "We had a comprehensive discussion on a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues. We are confident that India-US strategic partnership will continue to advance strongly in our new team," Jaishankar wrote on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan

Earlier in the day, Sullivan and Doval co-chaired the second meeting of iCET where they reviewed the progress in implementing the ambitious initiative. The two discussed ways to bridge the innovation ecosystems in various sectors. India and the US will provide more than $80 million over the next five years for the India-US Global Challenges Institute which will forge collaborations between institutions in critical and emerging technologies like semiconductors.

No water, power, road for 70 tribal families at Kodagu settlement

PRAJNA GR @ Madikeri

WHILE tribal people are given land under the Forest Rights Act, getting basic amenities has remained a challenging task for them. Thatalli tribal settlement at Maldare near Siddapura in Kodagu is a testimony to this.

For, the tribal people living in this settlement are yet to get electricity, toilets, water supply, and houses. With no help coming, they have threatened to launch a protest until their demands for basic amenities are met.

Over 70 families, including children and the aged, live in the settlement. Though a temporary water connection has been provided by Maldare gram panchayat, the residents of the settlement have to walk a distance to fetch water. This is because there is no electricity to enable piped water supply.

A hut in the Thatalli tribal settlement at Maldare near Siddapura in Kodagu

The residents, who have been living on the forest fringe for over seven decades, were granted RTC recently for the land given to them under the Forest Rights Act.

"Only a few families have been given some facilities. Though we have been granted RTC under the Act, no facilities, including permanent houses, have been given," Shankar, leader of the tribal people living in the settlement, alleged.

He said most of them are living in huts. "There are no approach roads to the settlement. Over 40 people had applied for benefits under the Ganga Kalyan scheme, but only a few have been selected. P5

Fuel prices in K'taka lower than BJP-ruled states: CM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

HITTING out at BJP leaders for protesting against the state government for increasing sales tax on petrol and diesel by Rs 3 per litre, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday said they should protest against the NDA government at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi for creating an environment where it has become inevitable for the state to increase taxes.

"Fuel prices in our state are lower than BJP-ruled states even after sales tax hike on petrol and diesel. Had the state received its tax share from the Centre on time, it would have not hiked the sales tax on petrol and diesel," the CM told reporters.

He said, "During the UPA rule under Dr Manmohan Singh, the price of crude oil in the international market was $113 per barrel. Although this price halved in 2015, Modi did not show any concern to bring down the fuel prices and reduce the burden on people. When Modi came to power, the Central Excise duty on petrol was Rs 9.48. It was increased to Rs 32.98 in May 2020. Who should the BJP fight against?" P6

EXPRESS READ

CID questions BSY for 3 hours in POCSO case

Bengaluru: Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa appeared before the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Monday in a POCSO case and was questioned for nearly three hours. Sources said the BJP leader refuted allegations of molesting the 17-year-old victim | P4

Man kills 7-yr-old girl for not buying gutka, held

Koppal: A 52-year-old man has been arrested for killing a seven-year-old girl after she refused to buy gutka for him. The murder took place at Kinnal village in Koppal on April 19 and the girl's body was found two days later. Police cracked the case on Sunday by arresting Siddalingaiah Naikal | P5